

## **Steps to Finding Peer Educators**

*Moe Armstrong*

Steps to finding peer educators include:

**Recruit**

**Train**

**Develop**

The Peer Educators support meetings are a chance to recruit, train and develop future meeting facilitators.

By attending the support meetings, people with psychiatric conditions have gained the support meeting experience. Some elements of peer support can be learned and some have to be experienced.

People can also see how much they enjoy the support meeting setting. Is the support meeting something that can benefit the attendee? Could the attendee someday be a support meeting facilitator? I have found, for the most part, the best ways to be a facilitator is to attend support meetings. Learning how to be a Peer Educator is On the Job Training.

People who attend the support meetings and might be future facilitators can see if they get something out of the support meeting environment. We learn from the other people in the support meeting. We just don't educate.

We are able to see how much people like the information and materials, which are distributed through Peer Educators. Facilitators should feel comfortable being a peer. People who attend support meetings can all learn together.

Recruiting people who enjoy learning is important.

Training can be on the job. There are books to be read. Understanding the Self Help Organization by Thomas Powell is an important book. We hope to come together discussing and writing down our experiences. The Peer Educators Project is more of mutual help organization. We are all in this together. We might know each other for a long time. Some of us have known each for a long time. Training is a form of learning together. Like the support meetings information is brought in and shared at the Peer Educators training. This information is knowledge that is recognized in the mental health field. We read the material and have a discussion. Sometimes we agree and sometimes we don't.

There are formal and informal trainings. We learn from times that Peer Educators are brought together in formal trainings. We also learn from our on going time together in the support meetings. We continue to learn how to be a better support meeting facilitator. We learn how to become better people. We learn about the mental health system and people in the mental health system that we

can connect with.

The ongoing learning is a way to develop peer educators. There are the regular trainings that bring everyone together which are a form of development. The time in the trainings is a chance for peer educators to network with other people.

Development comes from people having the chance to share information about what they have learned and what they have thought about with each other.

We can have the chance to develop our ideas about working with other people.

We can have the ongoing development of ideas about new materials that we might read in the support meetings. We can continually recruit, train and develop other peer educators and look for future peer educators from our educational peer support meetings.

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